

## **Empowering social action through narratives of identity and culture**

***Lewis Williams, Ronald Labonte and Mike O'Brien, Health Promotion International, 2003.***

### ***Abstract***

*Concern at widening health and wealth inequities between communities accompanying processes of globalization in recent years are reflected in contemporary definitions of health promotion, premised on the stratagem of individuals and communities increasing control over factors that determine health, thereby improving their health status. Such community empowerment practice is commonly accepted within the health promotion literature as encompassing intrapersonal, interpersonal and socio-political elements. Less articulated and understood, however, are the processes whereby the identities and cultures of marginalized communities intersect with and reverberate through these levels of action. The potential of identity and culture as important individual and community resources within social action takes on further significance within globalized contexts, which simultaneously expose marginalized communities to dominant cultural power relations while affording members new avenues for cultural expression. In this paper we highlight culture and identity as important aspects of the empowerment process, drawing on the experiences of migrant Tongan and Samoan women throughout a social action process in Aotearoa/New Zealand. In particular, narratives of identity and culture within storytelling as an empowerment practice are explicated, as is the articulation of identity and culture within more structurally orientated power relations throughout subsequent activities related to policy advocacy.*